ASSESSMENT OF STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONAL INTERNAL COMMUNICATION AND EMPLOYEES' PERFORMANCE: A CASE OF COMMERCIAL BANKS IN NAKURU COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

The success of most organizations is pegged on how effective communication is executed internally. However, most organizations including commercial banks fail to consistently prove the relationship between organizational internal communication efforts and employees' performance. The purpose of the study was to establish the relationship between organizational internal communication and employee performance. The study used a descriptive survey research design. The target population was 592 employees from 28 commercial banks in Nakuru County. A sample size of 150 employees proportionately sampled from all the 28 commercial banks was used. The main data collection instrument was a structured questionnaire with close-ended questions. The collected data was analyzed with the aid of the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences tool. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data and describe the characteristics of the target population and the findings were presented in frequency distributions, percentages, means and standard deviations. The Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient analysis was conducted to determine the relationships between the variables. The study established that horizontal communication strongly influenced employees' performance positively. Upward and diagonal communication flows were found to weakly correlate with employees' performance, while downward communication flow was negatively correlated with employees' performance. The study also established that a significant and positive relationship existed between knowledge sharing and employees' performance. With respect to communication climate, the study established that positive superior communication, open communication and subordinate-superior understanding were positive correlates of employees' performance. Majority of the employees were satisfied with the use of electronic communication channels.

KEYWORDS: Internal Communication, Communication Flow, Knowledge Sharing, Communication Climate

INTRODUCTION

Organizational communication is a dynamic process and involves complex communication techniques, networks and channels. It does not involve only upward and downward communication, but managers and employees communicate with each other in various ways at different levels (Ali & Haider, 2012). Organizations rely to a great extent on their internal communications. Their success is pegged on how effective communication is executed externally and internally, but the latter is the most important. Organization's internal communication refers to the communication between the employer and the employees and also amongst employees. The purposes of internal communications in any organization are to manage the receipt and dispatch of information to the users, build stronger internal associations and act as a means of process support for the organization. According to Chihocky and Bullard (2009), every organization requires some form of internal communications, but different organizations view it from diverse perspectives. They argued that there must be

effective communication between the management and the employees if the organization is to function. Whereas the top-down, employer-driven communication is crucial for setting a communication agenda or discussion point, it is the peer-to-peer employee communications that determine the tone of the response back to the employer. They further noted that some organizations consider internal communication as a means of creating a linkage amongst the staff members. Internal communication has advanced a long way from the management-sponsored journals of the past to well-organized systems of internal communications (Baines *et al.*, 2004).

In any organization, managers together with communication experts develop strategies to achieve organizational goals and objectives, construct relevant messages and then transmit through different channels for conversation with employees. Poor communication may lead to poor planning. Ultimately the organization will not be able to accomplish its goals and objectives. According to Ali & Haider (2012), implementation of organizational strategies heavily depends on how well the strategies are communicated to the employees. Kreps (1990), asserted that employee performance may highly depend on how well the employees are motivated. Motivation is one of the functions of communication. Motivational methods may include job enlargement, job satisfaction, job re-engineering and encouraging employees' opinions among others. These methods are part and parcel of organizational communication. Commercial banks just like other established organizations in the private sector are results-oriented and thus their primary objective is profit maximization which can only be realized through employees' performance. As such, organizational internal communication is paramount in the delivery of results among the commercial banks not only in Kenya but also globally. The study is necessitated by the fact that, in spite of the massive infrastructural investment put in place by commercial banks, there still exist a mismatch between internal communication initiatives and employee performance.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general objective of the study was to establish the relationship between organizational internal communication and employee performance in commercial banks in Nakuru County, Kenya.

The specific objectives of the study were:

- To establish the relationship between internal communication flow and employee performance in commercial banks

- To analyze the relationship between knowledge sharing and employee performance in commercial banks.

- To determine the relationship between communication climate and employee performance in commercial banks.

- To determine the relationship between communication channel satisfaction and employee performance in commercial banks.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The section presents specific literature related to organizational internal communication and its relationship with employee performance. The section reviews literature based on organizational internal communication under the subheadings of communication flow, knowledge sharing, communication climate and satisfaction with communication channels as they relate to employee performance.

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Communication Flow

According to the direction of information flow, communication has been trichotomized into downward, upward, and horizontal directions, which depends upon who initiated the communication and who received it. The boss-subordinate transaction through downward or upward communication is probably the most common communicative situation within a work organization. Downward communication involves the flow of information from superiors to subordinates and it is a dominant channel in accordance with formal communication networks. Garnett (1992), identified four roles of downward communication: conveying a vision, communicating to motivate subordinates, providing feedback on subordinates' performance, and assigning tasks and conveying task-related information. In most cases, task-related messages, such as goals, disciplines, orders, policies, and directions, are dominant. He further indicated two intriguing points of downward communication: message overload and filtering. He mentioned in one organization most of the employees, after eight months of receiving countless messages every day, began to throw every message into the wastebasket before reading it. Thus, downward communication can cause message overload to individuals, especially subordinates who usually receive messages, and it leads them to avoid receiving messages from supervisors, senders. O'Reilly (1980), empirically proved the relationship between information overload and organizational satisfaction and performance. He found that perceived information overload is associated with lower performance but higher job satisfaction. On the other hand, filtering means that messages have chances to be changed or distorted during their travel from top to down within an organization due to number of links in a network, perceptual differences among employees, and lack of trust in a supervisor. Morgan and Shieman (1983), argued that majority of employees felt that productivity was not better because of downward communication. The level of satisfaction and performance declined as communication scaled down the hierarchy.

Upward communication flows from subordinates to superiors. Upward communication is a channel that shows how work is progressing, what problems and opportunities subordinates see, what ideas subordinates have for improving performance, what intelligence subordinates gather about what clients and other organizations are doing and what subordinates feel about the agency, their superiors, and their jobs (Garnett, 1992). Horizontal communication indicates the lateral exchange of information, which flows in accordance with the functional principle among people on the same level within an organization. Upward and horizontal communications are emphasized for employee satisfaction. However, upward communication could be another instrument to control and regulate subordinates, since upward communication keeps higher levels informed about what lower level workers are doing, what their problems are, what suggestions they have for improvements, and how they feel about the organization and their jobs. Chen *et al*., (2006), in their study argued that the linkages between internal corporate communication and team peer and project team communication and employee engagement remains under-explored. Internal communication practices define employees' engagement in all organization. Potential of greater levels of employee engagement in an organization can be defined by three-way association between team, project and peer internal communication; internal corporate communication; and employee engagement. According to Welch and Jackson (2007), alongside other goals, internal communication can promote a sense of belonging and contribute to organizational commitment.

However, there is a concern as acknowledged by the two scholars that a predominantly one way approach to internal corporate communication leads to information overload. Line manager-employee communication became a process of sharing information, an opportunity for discussions, clarifications and suggestions, serious consideration of

employee concerns, taking actions and provision of feedback (Ruck, 2012). This seems to resonate with Truss *et al.*, (2006) who reported that employees having opportunities to feed their views upwards, feeling well informed about what is happening in the organization and thinking that their manager is committed to the organization, are the most important factors to employee engagement. According to Therkelsen and Fiebich (2003), communication that facilitates engagement between supervisors and employees is above all 'open'. It involves upward feedback, employees asking questions, voicing opinions, suggesting changes and feeling empowered. All these elements have been confirmed as relevant to employees' engagement by Ruck (2012). De Bussy and Suprawan (2012), revealed that creating 'genuine' dialogue requires much more than two-way communication. Real dialogue involves listening rather than talking, having positive regard for the other person-employee concern - and the willingness to change one's own position - employee orientation (De Bussy & Suprawan, 2012). This may suggest raising line-manager-employee communication to a new level where competency in dialogic communication is required. Ruck (2012), viewed internal line manager communication as specifically linked to employee engagement. He posited that line manager communication is linked to being an 'engaging manager' where facilitation, consultation and involvement are key facets of management. Indeed, Therkelsen and Fiebich (2003), views were that supervisors are key to effectively communicate and engage with employees. Supervisors are employees' preferred source of information about the company, they reinforce the company's message and interpret it for their people. They also emphasized the importance of frequent face-to-face direct communication between supervisors and their employees to increase trust, satisfaction, loyalty and productivity. This concurred to Quirke's (2008) view of line managers' role to provide the wider context, bring organizational information to life and make it meaningful for their people.   Through quality conversations, engaging manager's act as coaches and advisers, understand their people's emotional reactions and share a context for understanding and creating meaning. He further pointed out that competency in effective listening, influencing, eliciting feedback and facilitating skills are required in the process.

Knowledge Sharing

Prat (2006), observed that different types of knowledge can exist. On the basis of previous work on knowledge, he proposed four classifications for characterizing knowledge: explicitness, reach, abstraction level, and proportionality. First, depending on the degree of explicitness, there are explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge (Nelissen, 2002). Second, the reach classification distinguishes between individual and collective knowledge. Group, organizational, and inter-organizational knowledge are included in collective knowledge. Third, according to the level of abstraction, specific knowledge and general (abstract) knowledge can exist (Fowler, 2000). Lastly, there are declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge. Declarative knowledge is about knowing what, while procedural knowledge is about knowing how. The study focused on explicit and tacit (or implicit) knowledge. Explicit knowledge refers to knowledge that is expressed by formal techniques. It can be more readily and directly observed, captured, transferred or communicated to others (Pardo *et al.*, 2006). Explicit knowledge exists in the form of documents and visual materials. In contrast, tacit or implicit knowledge, which is broadly called local knowledge (Yanow, 2004), is subjective. It refers to practical know-how or intelligence based on experiential learning, which often is not openly expressed (Haynes, 2005). Tacit knowledge is knowledge embedded in individuals and is invisible to the outside observer. Tacit knowledge is not directly expressed or captured in formal ways (Pardo *et al.*, 2006). Tacit knowledge is a source of competitive advantage for organizations and can be distinguished from explicit knowledge (Kogut & Zander, 1992). Knowledge sharing is often used to mean the same thing as knowledge transfer and knowledge management (Kang *et al.*, 2008). Knowledge sharing is a broader concept than simple transfer of knowledge, emphasizing the process of or social interaction for knowledge exchange

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(Govindarajan, 2000). However, it is a narrower concept than knowledge management, which includes knowledge creation, transfer, and sharing.

Taylor and Wright (2004), examined the factors influencing knowledge sharing in the public sector. They reported statistically significant relationships between knowledge sharing and factors such as open leadership climate, information quality, satisfaction with change processes, learning from failure, a vision for change, and performance orientation. They emphasize top-down communication flow, familiarity with procedures or rules, non-monetary rewards, and the perception of motivation and ability to accept current performance levels. They further argued that attitudes about information on performance, a climate of honesty and openness, a willingness to face the realities of service performance levels, the pervasive fear of punishment for poor performance, and lack of customer focus all affect knowledge sharing. Yao *et al*., (2007), showed factors that facilitate and hinder knowledge sharing between Hong Kong government employees by using a case study and a survey. They argued that employees primarily use relationships and informal networks to share their knowledge. In addition, they contended that knowledge sharing is affected by culture, informal relationships, management support, incentives or rewards, lack of time due to heavy workloads, and individual benefits, suggesting that it would be possible that low morale, serious budgets deficits in government agencies, and trust could influence knowledge sharing (Yao *et al*., 2007). Examining the effect of types of coordination on knowledge sharing between departments in public organizations, Willem and Buelens (2007), found that lateral and informal coordination affects interdepartmental knowledge sharing. Kim and Lee (2006), examined how organizational structure, culture and information technology influence knowledge sharing among employees in public organizations and in private organizations. They argued that factors such as social networks, reward system, IT application usage, and years of work significantly influence knowledge sharing capabilities in both the public and the private sectors. Schneider (2009), found that knowledge exists in many forms and that co-production through collaboration produces useful new ways of approaching problems, which in turn can help improve performance. Kang *et al*., (2008), examined the relationship between knowledge sharing and individual-level work performance in the public sector. They found that knowledge sharing significantly affects work performance, and mutual trust plays a role mediating the relationship between knowledge sharing and work performance. Fugate *et al*., (2009), reported positive relationship between improved knowledge management in logistics operations and organizational performance. By testing the effect of knowledge sharing on individual performance and the interaction effect between knowledge sharing and goal-setting on individual performance, Quigley *et al.,* (2007), found a positive impact of knowledge sharing on performance and an interaction effect between motivational mechanisms and knowledge sharing on the relationship with performance.

Grant (1996), argued that knowledge sharing can strengthen organizational effectiveness by maximizing the utilization of shared knowledge by members in organizations. Chakravarthy *et al*., (1999), viewed knowledge sharing as a process for improving effective organizational performance by accessing useful knowledge from other work units. They also contended that knowledge sharing can help workers improve the quality of public services, and successful knowledge sharing needs institutional support and encouragement. In his study on examining the influence of knowledge management on organizational performance in the public as well as the private sectors, Anantatmula (2007), emphasized improved communication and enhanced collaboration in knowledge management to improve productivity and decision making. A study by Gottschalk (2007), yielded several propositions about the relationship between knowledge sharing and management capabilities, which may in turn affect organizational performance. His study suggested that increases in knowledge sharing will improve resource mobilization, decision making capability, strategic ability, and the ability to link

implementation elements. According to Lesser and Storck (2010), the ongoing activities of communities of practice affect organizational performance positively by decreasing the learning curves of new employees, responding more rapidly to customer needs and inquires, reducing 'reinvention of the wheel,' and spawning new ideas for products and services.

Communication Climate

Internal communication practitioners need to understand people in organizations and how to influence employees, knowledge, attitudes and behaviors (Strauss & Hoffman, 2000). They must be able to gauge an organization's communications climate and analyze the cultural, political and relational dimensions present within their organizations. Rational theories of decision making simply do not reflect the complex maze of personal, interpersonal, political, and ethical considerations that employees incorporate into their choices (Conrad & Poole, 2005). The entertaining and informing iterations involve technical skills while persuading employees, gaining employees' commitment, challenging employees and maintaining open communications demand more strategic understanding and involvement (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). It is the adopting of a strategic approach to communication and the viewing of that approach as an important issue which leads to high performance. Employees attach importance to communication with line managers or supervisors (Smith & Mounter, 2005) and employees' views of line manager relationships affect their levels of satisfaction, commitment and team performance. Internal communication practitioners, therefore, need to prioritize understanding organizational communication roles, seeking to engage those with responsibilities in communicating effectively and providing relevant support through coaching and skill development (Barrett, 2002). Robinson and Hayday (2009), reported that while being self-aware and able to adapt their styles accordingly to people and situations, employee engaging managers were found to be good communicators. By adopting a two-way communication approach, engaging managers were capable of effective listening as well as effective explanations. Additionally, they were good at valuing, consulting, involving, supporting and being target-focused while displaying empathy. Conversely, lack of empathy, poor communication, failing to motivate and blaming, were among the top disengaging behaviors. However, their work ignored the coaching competencies that managers need to facilitate employee engagement. Indeed, McCarthy and Ahrens's (2011), argued that when managers coach, they promote reflection and learning, encourage employees to take ownership, develop and engage in the organization. Madlock and Kennedy-Lightsey (2010), suggested that negative communicative behaviors had a greater impact on subordinates' organizational commitment, job and communication satisfaction than did positive communicative behaviors. This suggests the need for managers not only to adopt the right communicative competencies but also to avoid the disruptive ones. A study by CIPD (2012), demonstrated that one of the manager's roles is to enhance their employees' emotional engagement. They also posed greater emphasis on manager-employee relationship, communication, personal interactions and the managing of feelings. Moreover, they implicitly suggested that managers' communicative competencies impact upon the level of wellbeing of their employees, which is an important factor in sustainable engagement.

Internal communication when properly carried out enhances integration of employee within an organization. Saks (2006), noted that internal organizational communication reinforces the importance of clear, consistent and continuous communication in building employee management. Marques (2010), in his study observed that responsibility, accuracy, professionalism and sincerity in internal communication result in improved interaction, greater trust, greater understanding, enhanced efficiency, better performance and enhanced gratification. The study further argued that there is a connection between internal communication (based on accurate information, trust and interaction) and actual job

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satisfaction and eventual employees' performance. Welch and Jackson (2007), suggested that the function of internal communications has four dimensions: (1) internal line management, (2) internal team peer communication, (3) internal project peer communication and (4) internal corporate communication. They further stated that internal communication management includes participation in communication, its direction and the content of communication. In addition to the content, the four dimensions also highlight the two-way relationship between employees and managers at all levels of the organization and the importance of internal communication to organizational success (Hargie & Tourish, 2009) with effective internal communication leading to improved productivity, reduced absenteeism, increased levels of innovation, higher quality of services and products and reduced costs (Argenti & Forman, 2002). However, participation and direction of communication is strongly influenced by the hierarchical structure of the organization where issues of status, power, rank and prerequisites often cloud the form and content of upward communication. Today, organizations are adopting flatter more dynamic structures which have more inclusive participation from all levels of the organization. Hassan *et al*., (2009), attempted to identify the differences of perceptions between male and female employees on their superior communication behavior. Results of a simple regression analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between superior-subordinate communication and working relationship for male respondents, while results from female respondents shows there is no significant relationship between superior-subordinate communication and working relationship. The results indicated that there was a positive relationship between communication satisfaction and job satisfaction with work, job satisfaction with pay, job satisfaction with promotion, job satisfaction with supervisor and job satisfaction.

Satisfaction with Communication Channels

Carr *et al*., (1999), distinguished two separate communication methods; push and pull communication. Push communication drive information into the organization without any employee-initiated action or request. It is effective for dissemination of information needed and/or wanted by a large number of people. They further noted that push communication is effective in outlining the strategic direction of a business. Pull communication mechanisms require employees to seek information and include electronic media. Pull communication can be used to extract information about status of various initiatives, projects and daily performance measurements. A blend of push and pull communication is required for alignment in the organization. Du Plessis and Boshoff (2008), categorized communication methods and technologies into three categories: voice communication – includes face to face communication, cell phone and telephone; written communication – includes paper by mail, paper by hand and email; other communication include fax, IM, SMS, Skype, blogging, VoIP, Web conferencing and white boards, discussion boards, internal forums and others. The communication methods and technologies can be used independently in conjunction with others. The challenge for managers and supervisors is to find the most effective methods for communicating information in a timely and open way to their staff (Finch *et al*., 2010). The scholars also noted that when faced with a specific message to convey, managers must decide which internal communication tools will be most effective. The following should first be considered: the nature of the message, the messenger and the timing of the message. On the nature of the message, the more complex or the more important the message, the more likely that face-to-face communication is warranted. This can be supplemented by a printed or electronic version for clarity and consistency of message. E-mail or voice broadcast can be used as a reminder or update. On the aspect of the messenger, employees generally prefer to hear from their direct supervisors. However, 'big picture' news may be more appropriate coming from senior management. The cardinal rule on timing of the message is argued that, employees should always know about something that affects them before anybody else gets to know.

Employees feel more valued if they become aware of information before it is public knowledge. The communication media selection is critical in the knowledge transfer process. Media differ in their level of richness, or the extent to which they possess the following qualities: inherent capacity for immediate feedback, number of cues and channels, personalization and language variety (Schenkel, 2004). High-media rich communication is personal and involves face to face contact, while low-media rich communication rely on the forms, rules, procedures and databases. Murray and Peyrefitte (2007), argued that the messages should be communicated on channels with sufficient and appropriate media richness, otherwise they run the risk of being ineffective. Effective employee communication must start with the research of the preferred methods of communication. One way of managing the knowledge-transfer process is to select appropriate communication media for the property or type of knowledge to be transferred (Murray & Peyrefitte, 2007). Information about the employees' preferred communication methods and technologies is important in ensuring positive and effective communication (Du Plessis & Boshoff, 2008). Most of the studies have concentrated on 'top-down' transfer of knowledge to the employees in the organizations. Forman and Argenti (2005), recommended that a 'bottom-up' study of the recipients of information be conducted in order to determine the effectiveness of communication methods. The study investigated the relationship between various communication media and employee performance in the banking sector.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. A simple survey method was used to collect data from employees of commercial banks in Nakuru County. The target population of the study comprised 592 employees of all the 28 commercial banks. The study used a sample size of 150 employees drawn from all the 28 commercial banks. The large sample size increased the accuracy and generalizability of the study findings. Proportionate allocation of the sample size based on the number of employees in each of the 28 banks was done with simple random sampling being used. The data collection instruments used was self-administered structured questionnaires with closed-ended questions. Out of the 150 questionnaires, 133 were returned representing a response rate of 88.7%.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

From the findings, 56% of the respondents were male and 44% were female. The trend can be attributed to the general gender imbalance at the work place in Kenya today. The highest percentage of the respondents at 44% had less than 5 years' working experience in the banking sector, 37% had 5-10 years' experience while less than 20% had more than 10 years working experience in the sector which can be attributed to the changing workforce demographics and work arrangements.

Communication Flow and Employee Performance

The respondents were asked to rate on a 5-point Likert scale statements given according to how they felt about the communication flow in their respective banks. Their responses were analyzed descriptively and the findings presented using means and standard deviations. The study established that the means ranged from 3.80 with a standard deviation of 0.72 to 3.02 with s standard deviation of 0.89. The highest mean related to the statement "Most of the information I receive on a daily basis come from my co-workers" which reflected horizontal communication while the lowest mean was related to the statement "In this bank, my ideas are frequently passed on to top-management", reflective of upward communication. The findings were as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Communication Flow

Communication Flow	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Most of the information I receive on a daily basis come from my co-workers (horizontal).	133	2	5	3.80	.715
Most of the information I receive on a daily basis comes from my manager (downward)	133	2	5	3.77	.966
In this bank, the lines of communication are "open" all the way to top executives (diagonal)	133	1	5	3.52	.974
Most of the daily communication I receive comes in the form of "directives" from top-management (downward).	133	2	5	3.41	.759
In this bank, my ideas are frequently passed on to top-management (upward).	133	1	4	3.02	.892

Relative to a maximum score of 5, the means in the table indicate that most of the banks practiced horizontal communication followed by downward from the immediate manager and to some extent, diagonal communication. However, the mean of 3.0 related to upward communication indicated that the employees were not certain whether their ideas were frequently passed on to top-management so as to constitute upward communication from the subordinates to the management. Employees' performance was evaluated on a 45-point index that constituted 9 statements related to the employees' engagement and commitment to the bank as well as meeting of job performance targets. The respondents were asked to rate these statements on a 5-point Likert scale. Individual respondents' scores in the 9 statements were cumulated to obtain the total score for performance. The total scores were used to compute the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation coefficient to establish the relationship between communication flow and employee performance. The PPMC analysis revealed that there were significant positive relationships employee performance and upward communication ($r = 0.36$), horizontal communication ($r = 0.76$) and diagonal communication ($r = 0.322$). However, there was a significant negative relationship employee performance and downward communication ($r = - 0.33$). Whereas the relationship between employee performance and corporate communication remained insignificant, the overall communication flow had a positive relationship with employee performance ($r = 0.64$). All the correlations were significant at the 0.01 level of significance, with horizontal communication exhibiting the strongest relationship with employee performance. This is in agreement with observations by Miller (1999) that upward and horizontal communications are emphasized for employees' satisfaction. The managers get to know about the employees feelings towards their jobs, peers, supervisor and organization in general, thus allowing managers to accordingly take actions for improving the work environment.

Knowledge Sharing and Employee Performance

The respondents were asked to rate the statements given on a Likert scale on how they felt about knowledge sharing in their banks. The means and standard deviations of their responses were as shown in Table 2. The means of knowledge sharing dimension of internal communication ranged from 4.02 (highest) to 3.59 (lowest). The highest mean of 4.02 related to "Other departments readily share important information with my department" while the lowest mean of 3.59 was related to the statement "My co-workers and I readily share important information that is critical to our success". On the rating continuum, the respondents' responses varied from "disagree" to "strongly agree" as indicated by the minimum and maximum ratings respectively in all the sub-dimensions. In addition, the standard deviations from the means increased from the response with the highest mean (4.02) to the one with the lowest mean (3.59) from 0.79 to 0.92 respectively implying that the respondents' ratings of the various practices of information sharing in their respective banks

were varied and moved away from the mean progressively from the practice with the highest to the one with the least mean.

Table 2: Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge Sharing	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Other departments readily share important information with my department.	133	2	5	4.02	.793
My department readily shares important information with other departments.	133	2	5	3.98	.816
Most of the interdepartmental meetings I attend are useful for obtaining the information I need to do my job	133	2	5	3.67	.832
In most situations, I receive the information I need to effectively perform my job.	133	2	5	3.65	.769
Most of the group meetings I attend are informative and worthwhile.	133	2	5	3.65	.800
My co-workers and I readily share important information that is critical to our success	133	2	5	3.59	.922

Information was shared more effectively between different departments in the surveyed banks than between individual employees as the findings in the table reflect. Effective sharing of information between departments may be attributed to formal communication mechanisms within these institutions in cognizance of the need for synergy between the various departments to direct the efforts of theses departs towards accomplishment of organizational goals, which largely emanates from the overall visions and the wider missions of the respective banks. On the contrary, the minimal sharing of information between employees may be explained in terms of the competitions between individual employees which are usually aimed at outperforming each other so as to strategically position themselves for internal promotions which abound as a result of good performance by individual employees. Such competition forces individuals to limit the sharing of the kind of information they may have to their colleagues, which explains the low mean as far as sharing of important information among the co-workers is concerned. The findings of the correlation analysis showed a positive relationship between knowledge sharing and employees' performance ($r = 0.29$). The correlation was significant at the level of 0.01. Although the correlation was weak in strength, the positive nature of the relationship implies that high levels of employees' performance in the banking sector in Nakuru County is associated with effective sharing of knowledge not only between the various internal departments but also among the employees themselves. The result concurs with Taylor and Wright's (2004) statistical findings that there exist significant relationships between knowledge sharing and performance orientation.

Communication Climate and Employee Performance

Communication climate was evaluated in terms of positive superior communication, open communication of subordinates with superior and subordinate-superior understanding. The measurement of the various components of communication climate consisted of statements on a 5-point Likert scale. Positive superior communication contained items that reflected statements of positive communication between a subordinate and their superior, covered exchanges of encouragement, understanding and fairness between these two individuals. The respondents were asked to rate statements given according to how they felt about their relationship with their immediate supervisors. The means and standard deviations of the respondents' ratings were analyzed descriptively and the findings were as shown in Table 3. The study established that the highest score in the sub-dimension of positive superior communication with respect to communication

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climate was related to "Your supervisor makes you feel free to talk with him/her" with a mean of 3.85, while the lowest mean related to "Your supervisor is willing to tolerate arguments and to give a fair hearing to all points of view" (3.29).

Table 3: Positive Superior Communication

Positive Superior Communication	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Your supervisor makes you feel free to talk with him/her.	133	3	4	3.85	.359
Your superior encourages you to let him/her know when things are going wrong on the job.	133	2	5	3.67	.776
Your supervisor encourages you to bring new information to his/her attention, even when that new information may be bad news	133	2	4	3.60	.639
Your supervisor expresses his/her confidence with your ability to perform the job.	133	2	5	3.49	.724
Your supervisor makes it easy for you to do your best work	133	2	5	3.47	.669
Your supervisor is willing to tolerate arguments and to give a fair hearing to all points of view.	133	2	5	3.29	.754

The minimum and minimum scores for the statement with the highest mean were 3 and 4 respectively, indicating that the respondents were either undecided (Neither disagreed nor agreed) or agreed with the statement as confirmed by the low value of standard deviation (0.359), though the majority agreed with statement given the mean was close to the maximum score of 4 in relation to the statement. The trend exhibited by the descending means indicate that the superiors were basically encouraging to the subordinates to communicate on various issues but had low confidence and understanding of the subordinates. Open communication of subordinates with superior constituted items that reflected a subordinate's feelings of support, their superior's competence, candor and uncensored sharing with their superior. Table 4 shows the descriptive analysis of the respondents' ratings of their feelings about their relationship with their immediate supervisors as regards to open communication. The means for open communication ranged from 3.69 (highest) to 3.05 (lowest). The highest mean score was related to the statement "Your supervisor listens to you when you tell him/her about things that are bothering you" while the lowest mean related to "You think you are safe in communicating "bad news" to your supervisor without fear of retaliation on his/her part". None of the respondents strongly agreed with the statements as depicted by the maximum score of 4 (agree), lower than the maximum score of 5. Comparing the mean scores of the six statements in respect of open communication to the possible maximum value of 5, the findings imply that generally, the superiors merely listened to their subordinates tell them about things that bothered them, and lacked the necessary support and competence required to ensure open communication.

Table 4: Open Communication between Subordinates and Superiors

Open Communication	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Your supervisor listens to you when you tell him/her about things that are bothering you.	133	3	4	3.69	.464
It is safe to say what you are really thinking to your supervisor	133	3	4	3.36	.482
Your supervisor has your best interests in mind when he/she talks to his/her boss.	133	2	4	3.25	.656
You are free to tell your superior that you disagree with him/her.	133	1	4	3.22	.595
You can tell your supervisor about the way you feel he/she manages your department.	133	2	4	3.17	.597
You think you are safe in communicating "bad news" to your supervisor without fear of retaliation on his/her part.	133	2	4	3.05	.482

The PPMC analysis revealed that there were significant positive relationships between employee performance and positive superior communication ($r = 0.43$), open communication ($r = 0.39$) and subordinate-superior understanding ($r = 0.24$). Overall, there was a significant positive correlation between communication climate and employees' performance ($r = 0.45$). All the correlations were significant at the 0.01 level of significance, indicating that high employee performance was associated with positive communication climate. The researcher's findings were in agreement to the argument put across by Tourish and Hargie (2009). The two had noted that there is a connection between internal communication and actual job satisfaction and eventual employees' performance.

Satisfaction with Communication Channels and Employee Performance

The respondents were asked to indicate the channels of communication used by their respective banks and then rate their levels of satisfaction with those communication channels. The findings were as shown in Table 5. The findings indicate that most of the channels covered were used for communication in the surveyed banks, with the exception of blogs which 59% of the respondents indicated that it was not applicable to their banks. Majority of the respondents were satisfied with the use of website (69%), intranet (63%), internet (81%), E-mail (57%) and internal memos (68%). Significantly high percentages of the respondents, 44%, and 47% in each case remained neutral about their satisfaction with notice boards, various forms of printed media (posters, flyers, brochures and banners) and meetings with senior management respectively.

Table 5: Satisfaction with Channels of Communication

Channel	Not Applicable	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Total
Website	-	10.5%	69.2&	15.8%	-	4.5%	**100 %**
Intranet	-	5.3%	63.2%	31.6%	-	-	**100%**
Internet	-	6.8%	80.5%	4.5%	8.3%	-	**100%**
E-mail	9.8%	33.1%	57.1%	-	-	-	**100%**
Blogs	59.4%	1.5%	14.3%	16.5%	3.8%	4.5%	**100%**
Notice boards	4.5%	5.3%	39.1%	44.4%	6.8%	-	**100%**
Internal memos	-	12.8%	67.7%	19.5%	-	-	**100%**
Posters, flyers, Brochures, Banners	4.5%	6.8%	37.6%	46.6%	4.5%	-	**100%**
Printed Newsletters	9.8%	4.5%	41.4%	32.3%	12.0%	-	**100%**
Meetings with senior management	-	-	39.8%	46.6%	4.5%	9.0%	**100%**

The Pearson's Product Moment Correlation analysis revealed that significant positive relationships existed between employees' performance and internet ($r = 0.29$), e-mail ($r = 0.23$), internal memos ($r = 0.23$) and meetings with senior management ($r = 0.35$). These correlations were significant at the 0.05 level of significant indicating that high levels of employee performance were associated with their satisfaction with the use of the four channels of communication. The relationships between employees' performance and website, intranet, blogs, notice boards, posters, flyers, brochures, banners and printed newsletters remained insignificant. This may be attributed to the fact that most of the employees do not find adequate time either to visit their bank websites where blogs are usually posted, besides not finding time to read the print media. This reduces their level of satisfaction with such media, which explains the insignificant relationships between employees' performance and these media. Lack of time to read print media may be explained in terms of the employees busy work schedules which do not provide enough time to refer to these models of communication. The results of the study by Tseng (2006) indicated that there was a positive relationship between communication satisfaction and job satisfaction.

However, the study among others that were reviewed did not explain how the various communication channels impact on employees' performance.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the study, majority of the banks in Nakuru County mainly practice horizontal and downward communication. It was noted that horizontal communication highly enhances employees' performance. Additionally, both diagonal and upward communications enhance employees' performance though to a lesser extent. However, downward communication demoralizes the employees hence reducing their performance. The study concluded that knowledge was mainly shared amongst departments as opposed to within departments. Moreover, it was concluded that knowledge sharing slightly improves employees' performance. Further, the superiors did not competently provide support for open communication with their subordinates. However, if promoted positive communication climate could enhance employees' performance. The banks use integrative channels for communication except blogs which are rarely used. Majority of the employees were satisfied with the use of electronic communication channels mainly website, intranet, internet and E-mail. However, the only written communication channel which had high satisfaction levels was internal memos while the employees remained skeptical about their satisfaction with notice boards, various forms of printed media and meetings with senior management. Conclusively, satisfaction with a communication channel leads to greater employee's performance and the converse is true.

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